

THE STOLEN PLANS

By Jack Curtiss

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Bramwell, the general manager of the Loftus corporation, stared with a white face at Lewis, the treasurer. In front of him was an open safe.

"It's gone!" he said.

Lewis was shaking as if stricken with ague. "What—do you make of it?" he stammered.

"I tell you what I make of it!" shouted Bramwell. "The Neatfoot company has stolen the plans for our new engine. It means a difference of about twelve million dollars. They have been after it for a year. And to us it means bankruptcy."

Lewis closed the safe before answering. "After all, it's up to Feggis," he said. "He put the plans in the safe. He went off on a sudden jaunt to Europe without leaving any address. He's the president, not you or I."

"But how did it get out of the safe?" demanded Bramwell, when they were closeted together in the manager's office. "At least we'll trace the thief. Somebody knew the combination."

"Only you, I and Feggis," answered Lewis. "I trust you as I presume you trust me."

"Of course I trust you, Lewis. But how did the thief get into the safe?"

"Ever hear of the man who opens safes by catching the sound?" asked Lewis. "Some fellow like that. It's an easy trick, I understand. Some confederate in the office introduced the man—probably hid him in the ladies' coatroom around five o'clock, where he could hear the safe being opened. After that it was easy."

"Who works at night besides Peters?"

"Miss Graham."

"Whew!" said Bramwell. "Engaged, aren't they?"

They stared at each other and then smiled. There was small hope of re-

covering the plans, but at least it seemed to them that they were on the trail.

John Peters, President Feggis' secretary, and Nancy Graham, his stenographer, had practically the run of the office during the president's absence. The inquisition had narrowed itself down to them. Nobody else could possibly have been guilty. Peters had entered the president's employ in his present capacity five years before, Miss Graham seven. She had worked up to her present position at



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thirty dollars a week, and there existed some feeling against her, not only on the part of the girls who were now her subordinates, but among Bramwell and Lewis, who resented the fact that she and Peters occupied a practically independent position during the president's absence.

In spite of the heads' precautions the story of the theft leaked out. Insensibly the suspicion of the office